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**STRATOSPHERIC-BASED COMMUNICATION
SYSTEM FOR MOBILE USERS HAVING ADAPTIVE
INTERFERENCE REJECTION**

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Technical Field

The present invention relates generally to a mobile communication system and more particularly, to a mobile communication system using a stratospheric platform and a gateway station that forms the multiple beams on the ground.

Background Art

5 In this communication age, content providers are increasingly investigating ways in which to provide more content to users as well as interfacing with users.

Communication satellites have become commonplace for use in many types of communication services, e.g., data transfer, voice
10 communications, television spot beam coverage, and other data transfer applications. As such, "bent pipe" satellites transmit and receive large amounts of signals used or "multiple spot beam" configuration to transmit signals to desired geographic locations on the earth. Mobile applications such as telephones and personal digital applications are becoming increasingly popular.

15 All of these current mobile satellite communication systems, however, suffer from a variety of disadvantages. First, they all have limited frequency resources. Any given frequency over a given ground position can only be utilized by one user with mobile handset at a time. This is true regardless of the sophistication of the system, including systems that utilize
20 multiple beam satellite designs. Even when multiple satellites are available at a given geographic location, the same frequency spectrum cannot be used by more than one nearby mobile handset user. The availability of multiple satellites merely serves to increase the availability of the system to that mobile

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handset user who is assigned the specific frequency spectrum. However, the total capacity of these mobile communication satellite systems is still limited by the inefficient usage of the frequency spectrum. Thus, the potential growth of these current satellite communication systems is inherently limited.

5 Additionally, current telecommunications systems only allow mobile-to-hub and hub-to-mobile communications in most of the low earth orbit and medium earth orbit mobile satellite constellations. Mobile-to-mobile linkages require multiple hops between hubs. Thus, one user with a mobile handset utilizes a satellite at a frequency slot to communicate to his counterpart
10 on the network. Other satellites on or in the same region cannot reuse the same frequency slot for other nearby handset users. Thus, if a secondary user nearby has a handset that requires a particular frequency, which is being utilized by the first user nearby, the second user is unable to access the system through the same frequency via different satellites.

15 As described in U.S. Patent ³⁷⁰⁻³¹⁰ 5,903,549, satellites may use a phased array antenna to communicate with users on the ground. The phased array antenna is comprised of a plurality of elements that are used to form a beam. The beam forming is implemented by adjusting the amplitude and phase of each signal path routed to each feed element. Each individual signal path is
20 routed to multiple feeds with relative amplitudes and phases, which define each intended beam. In the '549 patent, the beam forming has been removed from the satellite and is performed on the ground. This reduces the complexity of the payload of the satellite.

25 Implementing a mobile communication system using a satellite is relatively expensive due to the typical complexity of the satellite payload and the expense of launch. The satellites also use a relatively low gain antenna, which is sometimes inadequate for third generation (3-G) cellular type systems.

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Because of the complexity, the satellites cannot be deployed quickly and thus, from a business standpoint, marketshare may be lost. Also, as new technology develops, the satellite must be replaced which is also very expensive.

5 The "bandwidth density" over a populated area from a mobile satellite system is limited. It is not cost effective to form multiple beams with beam-widths on the order of 10 Km or less at S-band from satellites. The required aperture is about 1 Km in diameter from a geo-stationary satellite, and hundreds of meters on MEO satellites. However, we can design mobile system using similar techniques but on stratospheric platforms to improve "projected
10 bandwidth density" by thousands of folds.

One limiting factor to the number of users of a system is interference between the various beams. To reduce interference, commonly either the number of users is reduced or the antenna aperture is increased. Maximizing users is a desirable goal. Also, increasing the antenna aperture
15 increases the spacecraft weight which is undesirable.

It would therefore be desirable to provide a mobile communication system that is capable of rapid deployment, is easy to change should the technology inevitably change and reduces the amount of interference with adjacent beams to permit high throughput.

Summary of the Invention

20 It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a mobile communication system that allows rapid deployment and provides adaptive interference rejection, in that the interference may be readily changed as conditions change. It is a further object of the invention to provide a stratospheric platform based mobile communication system.

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In one aspect of the invention, a communication system has a stratospheric platform with a payload controller and a phased array antenna having a plurality of elements. A gateway station communicates with the stratospheric platform. The gateway station scales the plurality of elements to
5 form a reconfigurable plurality of beams. The gateway station communicates an embedded control signal to the stratospheric platform to communicate a scaling of elements having adaptive interference rejection.

In a further aspect of the invention, a method of controlling a communication system having a stratospheric platform with a phased array
10 antenna having a plurality of elements, comprises the steps of:

forming a plurality of beams in a gateway station by scaling a plurality of elements using adaptive interference rejection;

communicating the scaling of elements to a stratospheric platform; and

15 generating the beams in response to the scaling of elements by the stratospheric platform.

One advantage of the invention is that due to the interference detection, system throughput is increased over conventional systems.

Another advantage of the invention is that the payload weight
20 and power consumption are significantly reduced without impacting system performance. The whole beam forming and traffic switching or routing mechanisms, normally on board the platform, have been moved to ground, taking advantage of the unique "spoke and hub" communications traffic topology.

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Other features and advantages of the present invention using digital beam forming on ground are readily apparent from the following detailed description of the best mode for carrying out the invention when taken in connection with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

5 Figure 1 is a system diagram of a communication system according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a high-level block diagrammatic view of the gateway station and payload platform having a digital beam forming circuit according to the present invention.

10 Figure 3 is a diagrammatic view of the digital beam forming circuit according to the present invention.

Figure 4 is a plot illustrating interference of two beams. FIGURE 6 is a diagrammatic view of a laptop computer having an antenna.

Best Modes For Carrying Out The Invention

15 In the following description, the same reference numerals are used to identify the same components in the various views. Those skilled in the art will recognize that various other embodiments, structural changes and changes in measures may be made without departing from the scope of the invention.

20 Referring now to Figure 1, a communications system 10 has a plurality of beams 12 that are illustrated as a plurality of circles 14 on the earth's surface. Circles 14 represent the footprint of a radiated beam onto the earth's surface. As will be described below the beams preferably move with the

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users. A plurality of user terminals 16M and 16F are used to illustrate mobile users and fixed users, respectively. Mobile users 16M may comprise but are not limited to automotive applications, personal digital assistant applications and cellular phone applications. Fixed user terminals 16F may, for example, 5 comprise business-based or consumer-based communication systems. Each user terminal 16F and 16M may receive a signal with the predetermined signal strength from a spot beam pattern that is radiated from stratospheric platform 18. The present invention is particularly advantageous for use with mobile terminals 16M.

10 Communication system 10 further includes a gateway station 20 that is coupled to terrestrial networks 22. Communication system may also include a platform operations center 24. Both gateway station 20 and platform operations center 24 are in communication with stratospheric platform 18. Gateway station 20 provides a link between user terminals 16F, 16M and 15 terrestrial networks 22 through stratospheric platforms 18. Platform operation center 24 provides command and control functions to communications platform 18. Although illustrated as two separate units, gateway station 20 and platform operation center 24 may be combined into the same physical location.

The communication signals between stratospheric platform 18 20 and user terminals 16M and 16F may be referred to as user links 26. User links 26 represent the transmit and receive beams from both categories of user terminals 16F, 16M and high altitude communications platform 18. A feeder link 28 is defined between high altitude communications platform 18 and gateway station 20.

25 High altitude communications platform 18 is preferably a stratosphere-based platform such as those under development by AeroVironment. Helios is one such project being developed by AeroVironment

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and is an unmanned vehicle that can fly for several months at an altitude of over 60,000 feet above the earth. Helios is a solar-powered, electric plane that is modular in design and may be configured in a variety of ways. The stratospheric platform is operated through the platform operations center 24 to
5 fly in a small radius flight path over a given spot on the earth. As far as users are concerned, the platform is geo-stationary. In addition to a plane-like platform, the stratospheric platform may comprise a balloon or blimp-like platforms.

Stratospheric platform 18 is used as a communication node for
10 gateway station 20 and user terminals 16F and 16M, each of which have an antennas that are pointed in the direction of the high altitude communications platform 18. As will be described below, the pointing from mobile terminals 16M may be performed electronically. Although only one gateway station 20 is illustrated in the figure, those skilled in the art would recognize that various
15 numbers of gateway stations may be employed. As would be further described below, gateway is station 20 with a high gain antenna that has a narrow beam width. The antenna may need a tracking mechanism with tracking speed adequate enough to maintain a communication link with the platform 18 throughout the flight path. Gateway station 20 may be coupled to terrestrial
20 networks 22 such as the public service telephone network, the Internet, or an intranet. Gateway station 20 has communications processing facility 23 that controls the communication with the high altitude communications platform 18.

High altitude communication platform 18 has a payload 30 that links with user terminal 16M, 16F through the use of a phased array antenna
25 and gateway station 20 with a feeder link antenna (preferably a parabolic dish) described below. In the present example, the payload 30 is used to generate a

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plurality of user beams configured according to the signals as determined in the gateway station 20.

Referring now to Figure 2, a block diagrammatic view of ground processing facility 23 and payload 30 are illustrated. Ground processing facility 23 that may be within gateway station 20 has an interface electronics 40 that may represent a plurality of different circuits. For example, beam generator 40 may comprise multiplexers, demultiplexers, routers and formatters. The interface electronics 40 may receive signals from the terrestrial networks 22 or may route various signals from different downlink beams from the platform 18 to the corresponding uplink bins. The "content" of all the uplink beams is placed into these buffers in the interface electronics 40. As illustrated, the signals of beam¹ through beamⁿ represent the buffered "content" that generated by interface electronics 40 and will be sent next to digital beam former circuit 42. The buffered signals are coupled to digital beam former circuit 42. Digital beam former circuit 42 generates element control signals that are ultimately used to control the phase array elements of the platform 18. Digital beam former circuit 42 "scales" all user signals by (1) dividing each user signal into number of paths, each corresponding to one element, (2) multiplying each user signal component according to the signal direction by amplitude and phase weighting, and (3) adding various user components together element by element, and (4) putting the component sum to corresponding element bins. As a result, the user direction information have been embedded in the way the overall signal set is organized, not by separated direction control signals. As will be further described below in Figure 3, interference from other beams may be estimated based on their respective positions and used to generate interference values for adaptively canceling the interference in a beam from other beams.

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The digital beam former circuit 42 forms a plurality of element signals of element¹ through elementⁿ. The element signals are coupled to code division multiplexers/demultiplexer 44. The bundled element control signals are then provided to an RF subsystem 46 that is used to transmit the aggregated signals through feeder antenna 48 to the high altitude communication platform 18. The platform 18 has an antenna 50 used to receive the aggregated element-signals from the gateway station 20. The feeder link antenna 50 is coupled to an RF subsystem 52 that processes the received signals in a conventional manner, including amplification, filtering and frequency down conversion. The RF subsystem 52 is coupled to code division multiplexer/demultiplexer 54 that separates the aggregated signals to individual element signals; the signals of element¹ to that of elementⁿ. The demultiplexer 54 has regenerated all the element signals developed by digital beam former circuit 42 on ground as discussed above. The regenerated element signals are sent to RF feeds 56, that provide the signals to the radiating aperture 58 of the phased array antenna 60. There are no phase shifters in the array. The element phasings for each beam are implemented in the digital beam former on ground and are embedded in the signal overall structure. All user signals will be transmitted simultaneously through the aperture. Thus, a user (user A) signal radiated from various elements will ultimately be added coherently in the designated direction (say, direction A) in far field, while other user signals designated for other directions will be added randomly in direction A. Similarly, in the far field along direction B, signals designated for other users at the same frequency band but designated for different directions will be added non-coherently.

Those skilled in the art would recognize that the ground processing facility 23 and payload 30 are also used for receiving signals from the users. Such systems operate in a reverse manner from that described above and therefore is not repeated.

Referring now to Figures 3 and 4, the digital beam former circuit 42 described above is illustrated in further detail interference rejection capability. Digital beam former circuit 42 has a digital beam former 70 that performs substantially all of the functions described above with respect to digital beam former circuit 42. In addition, digital beam former circuit has an adaptive beam processor 72 that is coupled to code division multiplexer/de-multiplexer 44. Adaptive beam processor 72 is coupled to user position files 74 that are stored within the ground based system. Because inter-beam interference limits throughput of the stratospheric platform wireless system, adaptive beam processor 72 together with user position files 74 reduces interference between the beams. Throughput in a CDMA system is limited by the number of times a given set of orthogonal code addresses can be reused in the coverage area.

As illustrated best in Figure 4, two user beams user1 and user2 are illustrated. The output at digital beam former of each beam is E12. The output at digital beam former is formed according to the following equations:

$$E1 = E11 + E12$$

$$E2 = E21 + E22$$

Eij is the receive signal in the i-th channel from the j-th user, i,j = 1,2. Both E11 and E22 are the desired signals from the mainlobe of the antenna. E12 and E21 are interference signals coming from side lobe of the antenna from the other user. E11 and E21 are identical except for a complex constant C21 since they are both found in user1. So that:

$$E21 = C21 * E11, \text{ and}$$

$$E12 = C12 * E22$$

The adaptive beam processor 72 extracts two output signals E1' and E2' from the input E1 and E2 as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 E1' &= E1 - C12 * E2 \\
 &= E11 + E12 - C12 (E21 + E22) \\
 &= E11 - C12 * C21 * E11 \\
 &= E11 (1 - C12 * C21) \\
 &\sim E11
 \end{aligned}$$

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The magnitude of C12 and C21 are approximately the ratio of the side lobe level relative to the mainlobe level of the beam. That is, C12 and C21 are small. For example, in a -20dB side lobe level antenna design, the C12 and C21 would be approximately 0.1. Of course, the exact number depends on the user location and the transmitted power. However, because C12 and C21 are very small fractions, the product C12*C21 is also very substantially smaller than one and therefore, the output E1' is a better approximation than E1 to the signal E11. Similarly,

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$$\begin{aligned}
 E2' &= E2 - C21 * E1 \\
 &\sim E22
 \end{aligned}$$

By using the user position files 74, the numbers for C12 and C21 can be estimated by correlating the user positions to the antenna radiation pattern. Thus, the interference of the adjacent beams may be compensated for at the output of adaptive beam processor. In a similar manner, each of the interference of each of the beams may be compensated for in the adaptive beam processor in a similar manner.

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While the best modes for carrying out the invention have been described in detail, those familiar with the art to which this invention relates will recognize various alternative designs and embodiments for practicing the invention as defined by the following claims.

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